DO GOOD TO
LEAD WELL
WITH CRAIG DOWDEN, PHD

Angela Bonfanti

Craig Dowden

Episode: Leading with Purpose: Core Qualities and Practices for Positive, Inclusive Leadership with Angela Bonfanti

What You'll Learn

- Purpose-Driven Leadership
- Asking Tough Questions as a Leader
- Building Resilience and Grit
- Creating a Culture of Feedback
- How to Find Your Purpose as a Leader

Purpose-Driven Leadership (09:06)

Purpose-driven leadership means leading with clarity about why you show up and what impact you want to make. Angela emphasizes that knowing your purpose guides decision-making, inspires others, and sustains leaders through challenges. A clear purpose aligns your actions with long-term goals and creates deeper meaning in your work, beyond just completing tasks or chasing profits. This type of leadership fosters authenticity and resilience because it taps into what truly motivates you and those you lead.

Actionable Steps:

Define Your Personal Purpose: Spend dedicated time journaling or reflecting on the question, "What impact do I want to make in my team, organization, or community?"

Align Your Daily Work: Regularly review your tasks and projects to ensure they connect back to your core purpose. Eliminate or delegate activities that don't align.

Communicate Your Why: Share your purpose openly with your team to invite shared commitment and inspire collaboration around common goals.

Revisit and Refine: Purpose is not static. Schedule quarterly reflections to assess if your purpose still resonates and adjust as needed.

Asking Tough Questions as a Leader (15:03)

Leaders must have the courage to ask difficult questions to uncover blind spots, challenge assumptions, and drive continuous improvement.

Angela highlights the importance of framing these questions in a way that connects to mission and purpose, reducing defensiveness and making the inquiry feel like an opportunity, not an attack.

Vulnerability and transparency help create safe spaces where tough conversations can happen productively. It's also crucial to approach these conversations with empathy, recognizing that those involved may have emotional or personal stakes in the topic.

Actionable Steps:

Anchor Questions in Purpose: When raising a difficult topic, begin by explaining how it relates to the mission or shared goals. This frames the conversation constructively.

Practice Vulnerability: Model openness in acknowledging what you don't know or where you see a gap. This encourages others to be candid without fear of retribution.

Use "Curiosity-Driven" Language: Ask questions with genuine curiosity rather than judgment, such as "Help me understand..." or "What's behind this challenge?"

Establish Regular Check-Ins: Build habitual opportunities (e.g., team retrospectives) to ask and answer tough questions before problems grow.

Building Resilience and Grit (17:59)

Resilience is cultivated by pushing yourself beyond comfort zones, accepting failure as part of growth, and learning from setbacks. True grit involves persistence, humility, and maintaining a clear connection to your purpose even when things don't go as planned. Being vulnerable is not a weakness but a superpower, combining humility with directness and letting your purpose lead your actions creates powerful fellowship and trust. Leaders build resilience by actively engaging, taking risks, and expecting to encounter challenges and "cuts and bruises" along the way. This grit requires showing up fully, embracing discomfort, and being willing to "fall flat on your face" and then brush yourself off to try again. Cultivate a strong, trusted team that both complements and challenges you, enabling you to grow through honest feedback without fear of retribution. Such a supportive environment helps leaders sustain grit and resilience over time despite inevitable obstacles.

Actionable Steps:

Take Calculated Risks: Volunteer for projects or responsibilities that stretch your skills and expose you to new challenges.

Reflect on Failures: After setbacks, write down what went wrong, what you learned, and how to apply those lessons next time.

Cultivate a Growth Mindset: Remind yourself that skills and abilities develop through effort and learning, not innate talent alone.

Build a Support Network: Surround yourself with colleagues or mentors who encourage risk-taking and provide honest feedback.

Creating a Culture of Feedback (21:06)

A strong leadership culture welcomes challenge and dissent respectfully, understanding that feedback is essential for growth and innovation. Angela stresses the importance of intentionally inviting disagreement and creating safe environments where team members feel empowered to speak their minds without fear of retaliation. She highlights that leaders must model humility and gratitude, openly appreciating when others challenge them, which reinforces psychological safety and encourages ongoing honest dialogue. Importantly, managing reactions to critical feedback with openness rather than defensiveness signals to the team that different perspectives are valued and necessary for better decision-making. Leaders can purposefully create opportunities, both formal and informal, for their teams to share divergent views, such as setting up dedicated moments to solicit opinions or even presenting provocative ideas to spark constructive pushback. This intentional approach not only strengthens trust but also helps prevent groupthink, enabling the organization to be more agile, innovative, and resilient in the face of challenges.

Actionable Steps:

Invite Feedback Regularly: Ask your team or peers questions like “What aren’t I seeing?” or “Where can I improve?” to normalize feedback.

Show Appreciation: When someone challenges you constructively, thank them publicly to reinforce that their voice matters.

Respond with Curiosity: Instead of shutting down opposing views, ask follow-up questions to understand their perspective deeply.

Create Formal and Informal Channels: Implement mechanisms such as anonymous surveys or one-on-one meetings to make feedback accessible.

How to Find Your Purpose as a Leader (40:20)

Finding your leadership purpose starts with introspection guided by meaningful questions. Angela recommends a four-question framework that uncovers your desired impact, non-negotiable principles, legacy hopes, and a bold, authentic purpose statement. This process transforms abstract aspirations into a clear and actionable leadership compass, fueling motivation and authenticity.

Actionable Steps:

Answer These Questions:

1. What impact do I want to make on people or the world?
2. What principles do I refuse to compromise, even under pressure?
3. How do I want to be remembered as a leader 20 years from now?

What is a short, bold purpose statement summarizing my leadership mission?

Write and Refine Your Purpose Statement: Keep it to one or two sentences that feel a little scary yet true and inspiring.

Share It Widely: Tell your team and stakeholders your purpose to foster alignment and shared accountability.

Use It as a Decision Filter: When faced with tough choices, ask if the option aligns with your purpose.

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Ready to Lead with Purpose?

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- **CNIB Website**
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For a deeper dive, listen to the full-length episode of the Do Good to Lead Well podcast featuring Angela Bonfanti on:

- **Spotify**
- **Apple Podcasts**

And if you're looking to elevate your entire C-Suite leadership team, learn how Craig Dowden can help your leaders perform at their highest level.

- **visit https://www.craigdowden.com/executive-mastermind**